



## Cook's Meadow Ecological Restoration

### Why is meadow restoration important?

The restoration of Cook's Meadow is the restoration of a dynamic and diverse wetland ecosystem. Meadows are sensitive areas that act almost like sponges, absorbing vital groundwater while creating nutrient-rich soils that support diverse vegetation and abundant wildlife. Yosemite has lost many acres of wetlands from draining, filling, and roads that have modified water flows.

### What was involved in the restoration process?

The Cook's Meadow Restoration Project was a 6-year effort that brought the National Park Service together with a wide range of donors, volunteers, and park partners with a common goal: to restore scenic beauty and ecological integrity to a centerpiece of Yosemite Valley. To accomplish this, actions included:

- Filling 4 drainage ditches created by early Euro-American settlers that were designed to drain standing water, but were seriously affecting the natural flow of water across the meadow and, therefore, its overall health.
- Removing a raised, abandoned roadbed and a trail that bisected the meadow and further affected natural water flow.
- Reconstructing the trail on an elevated boardwalk that now allows water to flow freely and reduces foot traffic on sensitive meadow plants.
- Installing culverts under Sentinel Road to direct runoff into the meadow and restore the natural flow of water from the Merced River during seasonal periods of high water.
- Reducing non-native plant species encroaching on native species by using manual, mechanical, and chemical control methods.

### What is next for the meadow?

Restoration of Cook's Meadow is largely complete, but National Park Service specialists will continue to monitor the meadow. This will include:

- Changes in the amount and distribution of water; both on the surface and underground, as a result of restoration.
- Changes in the abundance and distribution of native wetland plant species and non-native plant species.

Information such as this will be valuable for future meadow and wetland restoration efforts in Yosemite.